



Forest Stewardship on Alaska's Native Lands

A Forest Service and Alaska Division of Forestry grant program encourages good stewardship of millions of acres of native corporation owned lands.



TOP: Kenai Mountains, Kachemak Bay and forest lands of Seldovia Native Association

BOTTOM: Overlooking Toghotthele Native Corporation lands along the Tanana River

There are 30 million acres of privately owned forest land in Alaska. Most of it is the property of Alaska native corporations formed in conjunction with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA). The Alaska Region of the Forest Service and the Alaska Division of Forestry are using an adaptation of the national Forest Stewardship Program to help the native corporations use and manage their forest lands in a balanced and productive way. This good land stewardship is encouraged by providing grants to the corporations to develop their own Forest Stewardship landowner plans.

New Approach

Before 1990 the Alaska Division of Forestry mostly fought fire and enforced the Forest Practices Act on private forest lands. By 1992 the Alaska Forest Stewardship Committee and State Forester agreed to extend assistance to the native corporations. The Division of Forestry typically prepared stewardship plans for individual landowners, but the size of the native corporation holdings and the desire to limit

government intrusion into their planning process made that approach less attractive. As an alternative, the stewardship planning grant program was started.

Grant Process

To qualify for a grant, a native corporation must choose a resource professional to prepare the stewardship plan, pledge to provide matching funds for the expected planning budget, and confirm in writing that the corporation understands the Forest Stewardship Program, intends to participate in the planning project, and is willing to sign the completed plan. The program provides 50% of the grant at the beginning of the planning process and the rest after the plan is completed.

An Example

Gana-A' Yoo, Limited was one of the first native corporations to complete a forest stewardship plan. A nonprofit native corporation with forestry expertise provided the forest inventory and typing. Soils and wetlands assessments were taken from the exploratory soil survey for Alaska. Wildlife information came from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Local villagers helped identify cultural and recreation sites. The information was then compiled and mapped using a newly purchased geographic information system. In the final phase of planning, Gana-A' Yoo

board of directors and village elders were consulted to develop a 10-year action plan. The primary goal was to maintain the quality and quantity of subsistence fish and wildlife, reflecting the traditional lifestyle of rural Alaska. It was also important to Gana-A' Yoo to promote economic development by using forest resources on their 409,000 acres of land.

Results

By 1999, 11 native corporations had completed forest stewardship plans that covered nearly 3 million forested acres, and several more corporations were working on plans. Ownership objectives range from custodial management to intensive timber harvest, with a particular interest in salvaging beetle-killed spruce stands in southcentral Alaska.

By using this planning grant approach, the Forest Stewardship program has also created additional business for professional resource consultants. So far, five separate consulting firms have worked on forest stewardship planning.

Not all native corporations want outside planning assistance and the Alaska Division of Forestry is careful to respect the privacy and business culture of those groups. Some corporations don't have lands capable of supporting forest. But many native corporations with substantial forest resources are expected to be interested in the Forest Stewardship program in coming years.

Partners in this Project

- ♦ Forest Service, Alaska Region, State and Private Forestry
- ♦ Alaska Division of Forestry

To Find Out More

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Logging equipment working on Chitina Native Corporation lands



Spruce bark beetle outbreak on Kenai Peninsula in vicinity of Ninilchik Native Association lands



Logging road system on Chitina Native Corporation lands. Intensive timber harvest is a goal for some native corporations involved with stewardship planning.